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THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

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THE FINE AND INDUSTRIAL ARTS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, GRADE VIII

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The increased maturity of children in Grade VIII should bring ability to sketch rapidly things which they wish to describe, with a surer delineation of the proportions, position, and structure, to select with little hesitation the lines which express individual characteristics, and to appreciate and enjoy representing things that are beautiful in form and color.

In constructive work the previous familiarity with tools and processes should make possible the planning and completion of objects which are of practical value, for example, furniture, clothing, etc. Aesthetic appreciation should show itself in a preference for things which are in good taste, such as well-designed objects, harmonious color, and good examples of pictorial art, not simply because the children have been told what is good, but because that which is good gives the greater pleasure.

The following suggestions relate to phases of the arts which seem especially worth emphasizing in Grade VIII.

Representation.—The common use of drawing as a means of explanation and description should continue to be an important part of the work. Facility in this conversational use of drawing does not come from slowly and carefully finished work. It is gained only by practice in rapid sketching. On the other hand rapid descriptive drawing tends to become superficial unless supplemented by some serious and painstaking representation. Memory and imaginative drawing should also receive considera-

tion as ability in this line is necessary to ready expression of ideas.

Children in this grade should have opportunity for much use of these three modes of representation, especially in connection with subjects which call definitely for one or another of these means of interpretation. For example, incidental black-board descriptions or sketch notes in connection with arithmetic, geography, or history are often of little value unless they can be made quickly with a few strokes. Children frequently lack power to make such sketches because it is sometimes mistakenly supposed that practice in slowly finished work will give this ability. Facility with this sort of graphic expression should not be left to chance, but should constitute a definite aim. Nature-study, physics, and constructive work, on the other hand, demand truthful representation of form, a clear understanding of details of structure, and accurate records of observation which cannot be hastily sketched or adequately shown by a few strokes of the pencil. The children appreciate the needs of the case in hand and can be led readily to adopt the style of drawing which suits the occasion. Rapid sketching is learned only by sketching rapidly, ability in exact delineation comes only by making exact representations, and facility in expressing ideas out of one's head is developed only through drawing from memory and imagination. The one sort of undifferentiated drawing from objects which so often constitutes the larger part of the special work in drawing will not produce that facility in all three lines which is so valuable an asset.

In any line of graphic expression, whether it be rapid sketching or accurate delineation, the children should learn to draw by selecting the most expressive lines which are usually the long lines, and drawing these in right relation and using them to reckon from in adding details.

The practice suggested for Grades VI and VII of drawing typical solids from imagination till one can build them up by indicating correctly the main constructive lines, and conforming the others to these, develops ability to *construct graphically*, which is indispensable to good drawing.

Children readily learn to discover the few lines which show position and structure and by means of these to determine the directions of others and thus find the solution of an otherwise complex problem. They thus learn to draw objects as if they were building actual things.

For example in drawing a chair, the structural lines suggested in Grade VI for a box give a means of reducing to system and

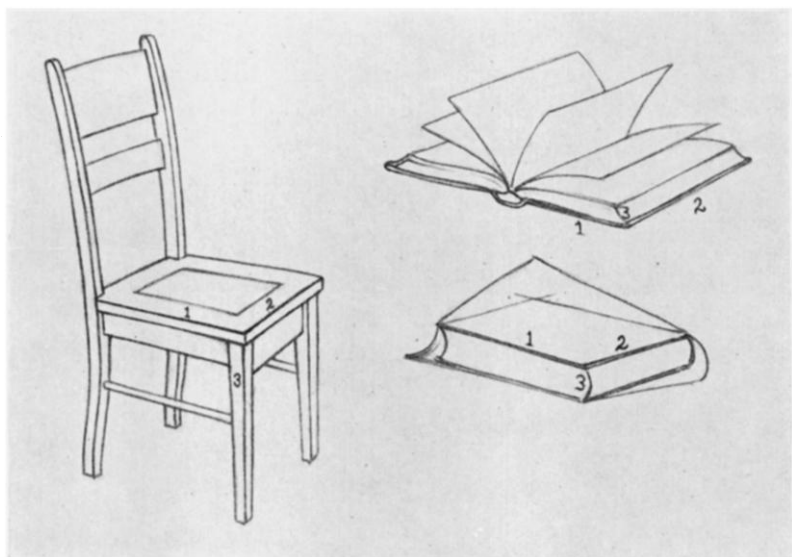


FIG. 1

representing easily the many lines which if unrelated would prove confusing (Fig. 1). The lines marked 1, 2, and 3 furnish the key to the direction of most of the others. If these are determined in the right proportion and at the right angles, the general structure may easily be completed. All slants extending upward to the left are determined by 1, and all to the right by 2.

The closed book in Fig. 1 represents an outline frequently drawn by children and within this outline the correct appearance arrived at by drawing lines to correspond with the key lines, 1, 2, and 3.

This does not mean that all the slants are parallel to 1 or 2.

The lines converge as they extend away from the observer, but when some facility in representing rectangular objects in different positions has been gained and the eye grows accustomed to interpreting drawings, *it will be found that the attempt to make the shapes look right results in an approximation to the proper convergence.* This method of approach differs from perspective taught by vanishing points and reference to the level of the eye, in that it is based upon an increasing reliance on the testimony of the eye regarding impressions supplied to it directly from the object and not upon an intellectual ability to compute results from external facts. Such computations are valuable as a means of checking up results after the visual perceptions can be depended upon, but it is doubtful if these conditions can be fully attained below the high school.

The same general principles hold regarding the representation of curvilinear objects, such as a glass or a bowl. The question most full of descriptive suggestion is not, "How far below the level of the eye is this glass?" but, "How far can one see into it?" The line answering this question establishes the curve which determines all related circles.

The different phases of nature-drawing suggested for Grade VII are of still greater value in Grade VIII. Silhouette representation with brush, of the growth and character of the plant develops freedom and cultivates appreciation of the style and individuality of the plant. Careful detailed drawings directly aid nature-study and develop a habit of accurate observation. If rightly directed, such drawing as this not only does not hinder aesthetic expression but furnishes some of the most valuable training in that direction. Drawing which never deals at first hand with conscientious study of facts is likely and, except in the case of a genius, almost certain to degenerate into stylistic conventions which soon become tiresome, and although they may be original are seldom worth originating. An occasional close study of the facts of nature often furnishes new poetical suggestions and fresh interpretations.

In this grade children can usually be interested in consecutive work upon a single topic such as horses, houses, boats, vehicles,

etc., or a country in connection with geography or an incident in literature or history, or some subject involving poetic interest, such as autumn, spring, morning, etc. Fig. 2 shows cover and pages from a boy's sketch-book.



FIG. 2

When interest in a topic is awakened, the various methods of drawing are all brought into use naturally. The children make rapid notes for general suggestions and careful studies for data. Their sketch-books become valued possessions full of material which contributes to the subject in hand. Usually the children can be led to add to their own sketches a collection of pictures related to the subject under consideration. These may be gathered from magazines and other sources.

This sort of interest in finding pictorial expression for an idea develops a basis for artistic appreciation. When pupils have become interested in trying to interpret their impressions of autumn into lines and colors and have selected from among autumn pictures those which are most in harmony with their own feelings, they are gaining experience which will help them enter into the spirit of a work of art which is an artist's interpretation of this topic with much more sympathy and responsiveness than as if they had made no effort to express it. The search among many sources, in nature, literature, and art for the embodiment of a particular idea or the expression of a mood should be an important element in all picture-study.

In each grade the pictures studied should be such as embody objects and interests which touch somewhere the experiences of the children. The first pleasure which later may develop into aesthetic appreciation may be awakened by well-drawn, vigorously colored pictures made for children as well as by famous masterpieces.

The following description of an experiment in picture-study in upper grades is reprinted by courtesy of *The School Arts Book*.¹

The topic, "Picture-Study," which occurs in most courses in drawing, deserves all the prominence that is now given to it. The majority of people want to be able to appreciate and enjoy works of art. Intelligent enjoyment of art is seldom gained except through special study definitely planned to accomplish that end. To determine what lines that study should follow has been the purpose of much discussion and experimentation.

One method, perhaps the method of least value in elementary schools, is to analyze pictures in order to discover centers of interest, balance of masses, leading lines, etc. This is helpful to adults as a study of one phase of the painter's way of doing things, but unless presented with clear understanding of its relative value it is likely to fail to develop a sincere enjoyment of pictures.

Another method is to show pictures to the children and encourage them to talk about what they see and enjoy. Incidentally, stories of the artist, the times in which he lived, and the things he chose to paint are presented to add historical interests and associations to the pictures. This way gives

¹"An Experiment in Picture Study," *The School Arts Book*, October, 1909.

pleasant acquaintance with works of art and awakens oftentimes a sincere liking for them.

If one allowed his judgment to be based upon the written papers which are sometimes asked for after lessons in picture-study, he might be led to doubt some aspects of this method, but perhaps the fault is not in the method but in asking too soon that children make a statement in definite terms of language, regarding matters of feeling.

Perhaps instructors who wish to awaken in their pupils true enjoyment of pictures, an enjoyment that is not a passing preference but an abiding pleasure, might find helpful suggestions from considering carefully the familiar statement that one gets from a picture only what he brings to it. It may follow that preparation for seeing a picture should be made before the picture is presented, in order that the children may have something of value to bring to it, and that the teacher's explanations may be unnecessary at the time. It is possible that such enjoyment of art as we wish our pupils to possess can come only when they have been previously interested in the subject which the artist portrays, so when they come to it they come to something which they themselves have tried to express even though crudely and which they rejoice to see set forth skilfully.

The following experiment was tried with a large number of children in Boston in the sixth, seventh, and eighth years of school, in order to observe the results of giving the children experiences which should prepare them to see the pictures which were to be studied.

Twilight was selected as a topic for special observation. The children were encouraged to gather pictures of twilight from magazine illustrations, photographs, and other sources. They were led to observe twilight effects out of doors. The results of these observations were rendered definite by means of notes made with water-color. The colors of the sky, clouds, trees, and buildings on different evenings were recorded. The children noted whether the buildings seen against the sunset sky appeared in their local color or were flooded with the golden glow, or contrasted with it by appearing to be complimentary in hue. The children were enthusiastic in their descriptions of twilight effects and made many sketches, some of which were crude in color while many were soft and delicate.

The next steps in the experiment were made possible by the cordial co-operation of the Museum of Fine Arts which reproduced in half-tone several of its pictures, some of which represented twilight, and made these reproductions available for the schools at cost. About 1,600 of these were bought by the teachers and distributed to the pupils. Each child made two or three simple copies in pencil of the Museum picture given him, reproducing the effect as well as possible by this means. He then experimented by adding to these pencil sketches the different schemes of twilight color which he had recorded. He thus gained intimate acquaintance with an

excellent black and white composition and added to this the color, an element which was the result of his own observation.

After this many of the children wished to visit the Museum in order that they might see the original picture. Those who had opportunity to do so, when they saw for the first time the painting with the composition of which they were already familiar, viewed it with particular attention to see what colors had been used by the artist and how his scheme compared with their own. Usually an art museum appears to a child to be something of a panorama. The previous study of a particular topic, however, served to isolate a few pictures from the mass and make them objects of special attraction. The children felt a fellowship of interest and effort between themselves and the artist.

Even those who did not visit the Museum gained much enjoyment of twilight effects in nature and of descriptions of them in literature.

One principal wrote as follows:

"You will be as pleased as I was myself when I tell you that two of my boys, evidently inspired by our collection of twilight pictures and without any suggestion on my part, brought me two poems bearing upon the theme we were studying in our drawing. One brought in a clipping from a newspaper which told of the ending of the day with the fading of the sunset colors, the night, and the dawning of another day, making application to the closing of a human life in this world and its subsequent awakening in eternity. The other, with the air of a discoverer, laid upon my desk Tennyson's 'Sweet and Low, Wind of the Western Sea.'

"I read these to the class with simply an acknowledgment of the source from which I had obtained them. I was not surprised when boy No. 3 laid Gray's 'Elegy' before me, a day later. I plan to have the class learn this while the strong sidelight of their picture-study is still shining upon it and I see the possibility of other work within the outline for reading, in correlation with drawing."

The possibility of developing other topics in a similar manner is evident. To each great artist some phase of nature has made a particular appeal and it becomes his field for study and interpretation. Perhaps the best way to develop the fullest enjoyment and appreciation of his work is to awaken interests similar to those which inspired his art and to encourage efforts at expression, however crude, of the same thing.

Construction.—Pupils in Grade VIII should have acquired sufficient ability in the use of implements and materials to undertake work, the plans and execution of which involve considerable skill, and which is of such a character that the results are of evident practical value and the workmanship sufficiently excellent to command respect.

Each child who takes woodworking should be able to construct during the year one or two pieces of such articles of furniture as chairs, desks, tables, cabinets, book-racks, etc., which can be put to actual use in the school or at home. If training in previous grades has been thorough and progressive, pupils can undertake individual projects of some importance and enjoy the effort and exercise of skill required to carry them to completion. Such projects undertaken before sufficient command of tools and familiarity with materials and processes have been acquired are generally unsuccessful. While, theoretically, skill may be acquired by means of individual projects from the first, the practical outcome with woodworking classes of reasonable size is that the instructor is unable to give the attention to each pupil which is necessary to the formation of efficient habits. A small proportion of the whole number produce excellent work but the majority make relatively little progress and do not acquire freedom from technical difficulties soon enough to enjoy the results of skill. Figs. 3 and 4 show samples of work by boys of Grade VIII. Objects similar in character were produced by nearly every boy in the school. The time allowed was two hours a week and the classes contained about twenty-four pupils each.

The cooking should develop ability to prepare simple meals and should involve some practice in setting the table in good taste and serving gracefully. Sewing should include making garments which may be worn and some knowledge of design and color as related to dress. Continued attention should be paid to the historical and artistic evolution of whatever industries enter into the school and community life.

Design.—In Grade VIII pupils are sufficiently mature to appreciate to some extent fine forms and harmonious color; to realize the difference between excellence of design which renders an object beautiful and permanently satisfactory, and that sensational or commonplace modification of form and addition of unrelated ornament which contributes nothing toward the perfection of the idea.

The constructive work and domestic science continue to afford some of the most valuable opportunities for design,



FIG. 3

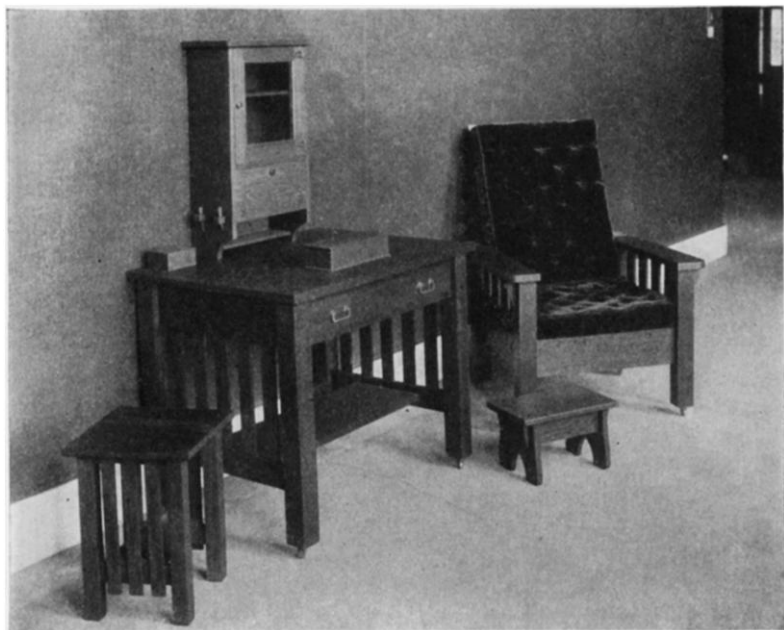


FIG. 4

because they furnish a reason for shapes and materials and an incentive to embody that reason most adequately and gracefully.

Putting into book form the work upon other school topics is a feature of design which is of increasing value each year. It involves the cover design as discussed in the last article, the title-page, margins, arrangement of text, illustrations, tail-pieces, etc. It is not necessary to artistic progress that the children make all their illustrations. The search for and choice of pictures which best embody the idea one wishes illustrated is an excellent means of developing appreciation of art.

One of the most important purposes of design is to develop good aesthetic judgment regarding the things with which one comes into daily contact. Such judgment can be cultivated by choosing the best from among many examples, good and bad, as well as by making original designs. For one who will design a vase or a wall-paper, five thousand will buy the article. It is therefore important to know how to choose well, and designing is not always the surest way of developing discrimination.

This choosing should be from such collections as the pupil will be obliged to make his choice from when he comes to buy for himself, as well as from examples which will always be beyond his reach. For instance if one wishes to cultivate good taste regarding vases, it is well worth while to study those in fine collections, but such study will lose nothing of practical value if it is supplemented by a choice, from among the material available in a local store, of the vase best suited to show the beauty of a particular style of bouquet, such as a few sprays of tall, slender flowers or a round bunch of short-stemmed blossoms.

Lamps are an interesting subject for study, historically and artistically, but added to knowledge of, and interest in, the finest known examples should be some exercise of judgment in choosing the best possible from available sources and this necessitates some concrete acquaintance with these sources. The present generation can thus be led to patronize the best at hand and create a demand for what is still better.

Children should also make or have access to collections of pictures of well-designed dwellings of all classes, public build-

ings for towns similar in size and means to their own locality, and be led to choose wisely among these. They should be encouraged to report on the most beautiful scenes in town. Where cameras are owned by pupils, a collection of local views should be made. A study of one place under various aspects gives results full of interest and artistic suggestion—as, for example, a street scene, or a landscape, at various hours of day and night, and in different seasons. This encourages the sort of study which the artist gives to his chosen subject.

An example of sensible teaching of design is that of a country teacher who found her one-room schoolhouse ill furnished, with no pictures, papers in the windows instead of curtains, an unpleasant wall-color, and poor furniture.

She undertook to change one item after another. The children discussed the best color for the wall. A tone was decided upon and presented to the committee who agreed to retint the room. Curtains were then considered. Samples were obtained and the best color and material decided upon. The children not only were allowed to have a part in the selection but were represented at the purchasing. Chairs, pictures, and frames were later discussed and choices made with the aid of catalogues and visits to stores. The making of the changes occupied two or three years and the money was obtained in part from entertainments given by the children. The artistic training was such that it developed much practical acquaintance with ways of selecting furnishings and incidentally the children developed a sense of ownership in the school. They sometimes inquired of the teacher, after a visitor had gone, whether any remarks had been made regarding the excellent appearance of the room.

Continued use of water-colors should develop increased discernment and enjoyment of colors as they occur in nature. Children in this grade should also become familiar with simple color-harmonies, partly by acquaintance with good examples and partly by experimenting with colors to render them more pleasing in combination.

One can usually secure excellent color-harmonies by choosing with some care among color-prints, particularly those from the

Orient, from fabrics, and often from nature. The groups of colors occurring in lichens, faded leaves, etc., sometimes furnish good material. The children should match these colors and use them in designs.

Simple experiments in harmonizing colors may be tried by introducing a common element into each of a group of two or three colors to bring them into closer relation. For example, two colors like red and blue, which in full intensity are not usually pleasing, can be made more agreeable in combination by mixing a little of each with the other. The red still counts as red and the blue as blue, but the common element has made them less antagonistic. A little gray or some of a third color mixed with each produces a similar result. Children should try such experiments with a number of colors and choose for use in their designs the tones where the proportion of mixture gives the best effect.

By the end of the eighth year children should have gained ability to use drawing as a common means of expression, and to make rapid descriptive sketches, careful, well-constructed drawings, or truthful records of observations, as occasion may require. They should be able to undertake common constructive problems with knowledge of tools and processes, and some ability to convert raw materials into a finished product according to a predetermined idea. They should have taste in choosing what is good among things relating to the home and community and should enjoy beauty of form and harmony of color in nature and in art.

They should have enough acquaintance with what artists have produced to lead them to find some favorites among objects of fine art as they have among books, so that they will desire to possess reproductions of these.

They should also have gained an interest in productive labor sufficient to interpret things to them in terms of the effort and skill required to produce them and should have developed a healthful enjoyment in the exercise of their abilities which will demand for its satisfaction an occupation which adds to the well-being of the community.